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Tarkiln Building To Get Facelift

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

The 113-year-old Tarkiln Community Center on Route 53 will receive some badly needed repairs, selectmen decided this week.

The former Millbrook school built in 1887 has fallen into disrepair and needs extensive interior and exterior renovations; there had been talk around town hall about its possible demolition. However, its basic structure and foundation are solid and therefore it can be saved.

A report by consultants hired to assess the wooden building, presented selectmen Monday night with three op-

tions: complete renovation with handicapped accessibility, \$557,000; making necessary repairs to keep the building standing, \$285,000; or demolition, \$20,000.

Selectmen decided to take the repair work in stages, beginning with the exterior and will support a public works capital budget item at town meeting for this purpose. The exterior clapboards are warping and worn and were sand-blasted in the past to remove years of paint; the fascia and soffit boards are rotting, and the gutters are not working well, said the consultants. However, the roof and foundation are in

good shape. Overall, the consultants recommended the building be preserved.

"It's a wonderful old building and it has a lot of history in town," said Bill Lockwood of Gale Associates Inc. in Pembroke. "It's in need of considerable attention."

Consultant Robert Emmett Cronin said: "The structure itself is in great condition. The skin is in rough shape...there's a lot of work required to bring it up to grade on the inside and outside."

Tarkiln is currently used by a dance group, the Boy Scouts, as a church and for various

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town meetings. The two youth baseball fields behind it are heavily used. There are also two tennis courts on the 5.75 acre parcel.

Inside the building, there are hardwood floors and tin details on the walls. There is open space for gatherings and a kitchen. A complete renovation

school houses left in Duxbury and that the commission supported any efforts to preserve the Greek-Revival styled building. She suggested that if the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, then grant money could be available for its repair; however, this is a long process with



The Tarkiln Community Center was originally a schoolhouse.

to Tarkiln would restore the exterior and the interior and upgrade its electrical, heating, and pumping systems. A new septic system would be installed and the building would be made handicapped accessible. Currently, there is a ramp at the rear of the building, but it doesn't meet handicapped accessibility standards: it's too steep and has a railing only on one side. Also, getting from the parking lot to the ramp is difficult and the building's doors are not wide enough.

"Getting into this one is challenging in all respects," said Lockwood. "A great deal of work would be required to bring it up to standards." However, he added: "It can be repaired. It can be made a useful building again."

Tarkiln generates into about \$3,500 a year in lease revenue, which is managed by the Tarkiln Trustees, who oversee the building. The consultants felt that once the building was repaired, it could be used more frequently and generate additional income. Director of Public Works Wally Tonaszuck suggested this money be put into a revolving fund set up to help maintain the building.

Selectman John Tuffy felt a long-range plan for the building's use and maintenance was needed.

Selectmen Chairman Margaret Kearney was happy the building could be repaired, because she was aware that there had been talk of its demolition: "I think we got some really good news tonight and I'm pleased that the building is in better shape than we had thought," she said.

Martha Himes of the Duxbury Historical Commission told selectmen that Tarkiln is one of only a handful of old

a lot of red tape, she said.

Jack Williams has been a Tarkiln Trustee for over 30 years. He told selectmen that in 1950 when the school moved from Tarkiln into the Lower Alden building, "people from that end of town got permission to take over and use it." Families such as the DeLorenzos and the Bongis formed an association and used it for spaghetti suppers. The functions grew so large that the association asked the town for money to maintain the building. (The current DPW Tarkiln budget is \$5,000.) Williams said past boards of selectmen used to call him and his other trustees into their meetings for updates on the buildings, but that hasn't happened in the recent years. There has also been difficulty getting new trustees to serve. Tonaszuck has suggested taking control away from the trustees and putting the building under his department.